

not collapse if we open up insurance so that all Americans have access to insurance and that we have 100 percent coverage.

What I am shocked about, something as vital as health insurance and as close to saving your life as health insurance, people are willing to say it's okay if 47 million Americans are uninsured. They seem to believe that that is a statistical number that we can bear.

I want these individuals who have suffered unfortunately and tragically from our failed health care system—not in terms of quality, not in terms of commitment, not in terms of good hospitals, but in terms of covering all Americans and lowering the costs.

Democrats are standing here advocating for lowering the costs. And this document that was presented to us by, if I might, by Karen Davis, president of the Commonwealth Fund, suggests to us if we had suggested the health care reform of Nixon—who was a Republican—of Carter and of Clinton, we would have had lower health care costs today.

And I can assure you we wouldn't have the premium surge, the upstart, the support of the premiums that are probably impacting the family between mortgage foreclosures that have not been responded to, the \$600-a-month premium that they have to pay in order to provide for their family.

Mr. ELLISON. If the gentlelady will yield, I have one more I want to show to you.

Another gentleman named Patrick who says, We have a 19-month-old daughter with congenital heart problems. We're self-employed. She was denied coverage. We pay \$14,000 a year.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. This is a crime.

Congressman ELLISON, thank you for that real-life exhibit, if you will. And to that family, we don't want to suffer this kind of injustice to you much longer, a 19-month-old who is denied because of preexisting disease.

I know if we start this program, first of all, we're expanding CHIP, Children's Health Insurance Program, we will be expanding Medicaid. We'll have a public option. There will be an opportunity for the private insurers. This is a big country. We're growing exponentially, and the issue is, those are the sad stories.

I wish that gentleman could come here to Washington and tell his story because these are the voices that need to be heard. Even though we heard them in our town hall meetings, they need to be here in the Nation's capital, their home, their capital, to tell this body and the other body what this is in real life and real time.

Mr. ELLISON. If the gentlelady and the gentleman will yield.

We are down to about 1 minute.

So let me just say—because you will have the last word—this is the Progressive Caucus coming to you week after week for a progressive version of Amer-

ica where we're all included, we're all a part, health care for all, peace now, environmental sustainability, and civil rights for everybody, health care performed, patients before profits.

I yield to the gentlelady and the gentleman for their last words.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I am proud to be part of the Progressive Caucus and working closely in negotiating and working with my colleagues on ensuring a vigorous public option to save 18,000 lives every year.

I yield to the distinguished gentleman.

Mr. CONYERS. I just want to close the debate hoping that one of the dozen presidents of the health insurance companies will join us—maybe all of them or as many as schedules will permit. What I want them to know is that they've never said that they didn't care about the 47 million people who aren't insured.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate agrees to the report of the committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 2997) "An Act making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2010, and for other purposes."

TURNING POINT IN WAR ON TERRORISM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. HUNTER. You know, we're at a turning point right now in the war on terrorism. We talked about Afghanistan today, Madam Speaker. But first as we do this, I would like to yield as much time as he may consume to the gentleman from Florida, an Army veteran and a member of the House Armed Services Committee, TOM ROONEY

Mr. ROONEY. Thank you, Mr. HUNTER.

Just last week, myself, along with Mr. HUNTER from California, sent a letter to the President asking him to take seriously the request of General McChrystal, the commander in Afghanistan; ask McChrystal to come to this body and address the Congress—or at least address the Armed Services Committee, of which I am a member—to let us know what his plan is in a very specific and detailed manner so that we can ask the tough questions, that we can do the people's work and to look out for our men and women serving in uniform.

Along with many members of the freshman class, that letter was sent last week, and along with many other

letters sent to the President, along with letters sent to my office, phone calls asking me to support our troops, support the generals on the ground, support our military chain of command and to do the right thing in Afghanistan. And that's to give us a chance to win where we know that we can win.

The United States versus the Taliban. Think about that for a second. The United States versus the Taliban. And what the questions are and what we have to do. As Sun Tzu said, Don't go to war until you know you can win; and when you go to war, know that you've already won it.

So what General McChrystal is asking the President to do quite simply is three things to win the war in Afghanistan: First, give us a surge in troops more than the troops that we've already approved—at least 43,000 more troops—to be able to secure the towns and villages and cities so that people feel safe, so that people come out of the woodwork and the intimidation of the Taliban and can feel that they can trust the Americans and our allies, that we're not going to leave, that we're going to stand by them and stand by for the people's rights and freedom in Afghanistan.

□ 1745

This has been an issue of a lot of contention and, quite frankly and unfortunately, politics, not only here in the House but between the two parties and across this great country. The second thing is to integrate with the Afghan people. It's going to be risky. We are going to have to come out from behind the walls, out of the Bradleys, come down from the turrets in the Humvees and really do a much better job of winning the hearts and minds of the Afghan people.

It's going to open us up to risk, and it's going to up us up to harm's way, quite frankly. But I think General McChrystal understands that it's going to take some sacrifice; it's going to take making the risks and the hard decisions to be able to accomplish this goal. Because, on the other hand, you have the Taliban, which operates under intimidation, operates under violence and threats that, if you cooperate with the Americans, we won't forget it and you will be punished, and there will be recourse for the things that you have done to cooperate with the enemy, in that case, us, the United States.

The third thing that General McChrystal asks of the Commander in Chief is to help end the corruption in Afghanistan politically. This is the hardest of the three prongs and I think the most important. The local governments, the regional governments and the central national government have a long, long way to go in ending what has been a long string of corruption in Afghanistan. That's going to be the most difficult aspect of General McChrystal's request. But, again, we have the best team in place.

The President, to his credit, has assembled the finest military and civilian defense staff that, as a former Army captain, I could possibly ask for, Secretary Gates, Jim Jones, General Petraeus, even General Shinseki being on the cabinet, even though he's with the Veterans Administration, just an outstanding dream team of military brass. We have the best team in place.

I urge the President to listen to them, take their counsel, do the right thing in Afghanistan, finish the job that we started there. Whether or not it was neglected, whatever argument you want to make, starting from today on, for the kids that are there now, that are manning a post, that are out there alone and cold and homesick and undermanned, let's do the right thing and send a message to the world that the United States of America will stand up for freedom across this great planet of ours and stand by where freedom wants to ring out.

And I believe it does, and I believe it will; and we should not let politics play a role in this, and let the generals on the ground do their job, and then support the President once he makes that decision.

Thank you, Mr. HUNTER and Madam Speaker.

Mr. HUNTER. I thank the gentleman from Florida for his service in the Army as well as his service now to the Nation in Congress. He's really living up to those Army ideals. You know, now that this security situation in Iraq is under control and U.S. forces are beginning to rotate out of that region, we're confronted with a new challenge of equal significance in Afghanistan.

By all accounts, the combat mission in Afghanistan has reached an important crossroad. In March, President Obama unveiled a new approach to achieve this victory in Afghanistan, reminding all Americans of the necessity to disrupt, and I quote from President Obama, disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda, in Pakistan and Afghanistan and to prevent their return to either country.

Leading the mission in Afghanistan is General Stanley McChrystal who was appointed by the President and Secretary Gates to evaluate the situation on the ground and provide a resource request detailing the needs to achieve his victory. The President now has General McChrystal's request in hand, which includes adding another 40,000 combat troops, minimum, to the region.

As the President considers what course to take, the security situation in Afghanistan is deteriorating. The insurgency is gaining strength, and U.S. soldiers, marines, sailors and airmen, as well as our allies, are being increasingly targeted by ambushes and roadside bomb attacks. To prevent mission failure and to protect those troops already there, the President must act quickly to fulfill General McChrystal's request for more combat resources.

Only until recently the collective commitment to this new strategy has

come into question. Some in Congress have raised opposition to any type of troop surge whatsoever, even if it means defeat. They instead prefer to maintain or draw down our combat forces, focus on training local security, and rely on targeted air strikes and drone strikes. While a scaled back strategy might be attractive to some people, it would inevitably constrain resources already in short supply in Afghanistan, unnecessarily putting our mission and the safety of the coalition forces at risk.

General McChrystal has made it clear that a small footprint counterinsurgency strategy will not work in Afghanistan. What's more, General McChrystal has clearly defined our objectives and the metrics for achieving victory against a resurgent Taliban and possibly al Qaeda. This entails our ground forces working to stand up Afghanistan's security and police forces as we did in Iraq and substantively weaken the stronghold of al Qaeda and the Taliban to the point where these local forces can effectively take control.

Madam Speaker, this is nothing new. We had almost the exact same challenges in Iraq and we were told 2 or 3 years ago we were going to lose in Iraq, the surge wouldn't work; there was no way we could win. It was a quagmire. We were going to be stuck there, and Iraq was another Vietnam. Well, guess what? You can walk up to any soldier, marine, sailor or airman who has served over there and don't just say, thanks for serving, you can say thanks for victory, because we're now rotating home out of Iraq in victory, not defeat because of General Petraeus, General Odierno and the almost exact same strategy of surging to provide security so that we could stand up the Iraqi forces, stand up the Iraqi military and the Iraqi police and the Iraqi Government so that we can leave.

Afghanistan is not Iraq, true, but that counterinsurgency strategy still stands. It still works. The more troops we send over to Afghanistan, the more secure we can make Afghanistan and the quicker we can leave Afghanistan victoriously. We truly are at a vital turning point in Afghanistan, and the President does have a very difficult decision to make. To quote General McChrystal: time matters. We must act now to reverse the negative trends and demonstrate progress.

President Obama himself, in March, said that the counterinsurgency strategy, also known as COIN, is the way to defeat the Taliban in Afghanistan and to defeat al Qaeda. The strategy presented by the President and his national security team would require, quote by the President, executing and resourcing an integrated civilian, military counterinsurgency strategy.

But now, the President, instead of listening to the general he appointed who is the resident expert in Afghanistan, who's on the ground in Afghanistan, and who the President had not

even met with face to face until he took his Olympic sightseeing tour to Denmark when he finally deigned to meet General McChrystal face to face, he's now listening to possibly Vice President BIDEN. So he's going to listen to Vice President BIDEN's advice on Afghanistan instead of the four-star general who he put in charge in Afghanistan.

In mid-April, Chairman Mullen and Secretary of Defense Gates actually replaced General McKiernan with General McChrystal because he specialized in counterterrorism. Counterterrorism. That's what Vice President BIDEN wants to do. McChrystal, even after being an expert in counterterrorism, came back and said, counterterrorism is not going to work. It's got to be counterinsurgency. So to have this counterterrorism expert come out and say counterterrorism's not going to work, we need a COIN strategy, the counterinsurgency strategy, we need to get the Afghan people on our side and the only way to do that is to secure the area, that's pretty phenomenal.

As we speak right now, Madam Speaker, the Iraqi troop levels are going down. Equipment and resources are coming back over here to the U.S., and they're also going to Afghanistan. We have won in Iraq, and we can win in Afghanistan; and we can bring civility to the Afghan Government so that we can leave.

But here's what we have to do. We have to have enough boots on the ground to provide security needed to properly train and equip the Afghan security forces, both police and army. You'll see many people saying that it's impossible in Afghanistan because Afghanistan's a much larger land area than Iraq is. That is true.

Afghanistan has more area than Iraq does. But it's got much smaller concentrated population centers. There's only two really. There's RC South. This is the Helman province. Kandajar's there. That's where the marines are at this point in time. Then you have Kabul and RC East. That's where the Army focuses on. Pakistan's over there to the east. This is that mountainous range where you have drug runners coming across, you have people bringing weapons across, you have Taliban, al Qaeda and general bad guys coming across with that far arrow. Then you have RC South here where those marines are in Kandajar.

Those are the two main population centers. That's what we're focusing on. When it comes to IEDs going off, those are improvised explosive devices, the roadside bombs, the 155 rounds put underground by the bad guys to blow us up.

In Iraq we had a very complex road system. There were towns all over, cities all over, bases all over. We had to run resupply routes going everywhere. In Afghanistan you don't have that. You have one main road that rings the entire country. It's called Ring Road because it's a big round road. The only

places we have to stop these IEDs from going off are between those two arrows. That's it. These IED casualties that we see coming back, which is 85 percent of our casualties in Afghanistan right now, are improvised explosive device casualties.

If we stop those, we will stop sustaining major casualties so we can move on to this security phase. We have to stop the IEDs and we can do it just like we did in Iraq; and it's actually easier to do it in Afghanistan. The Department of State needs to work on the Afghan government structure. I won't argue with anybody who says that the Afghan Government right now is almost completely corrupt. There are many charges leveled against President Karzai who says he's corrupt.

And the Afghan government system that we have set up right now over there does not represent the thousands of the years of the Afghan tribal set-up that they've had that the Afghan people are used to. That's going to be a major challenge. Getting the Afghan people to trust in their government so that they actually go out and vote and they actually tell us where these improvised explosive devices are being implanted, that's a counterinsurgency problem.

We need to work on the Afghan Government. We need to make sure that it's not corrupt. Right now I am a Congressman from San Diego, California. I was voted in by the people of San Diego. In Afghanistan you don't have that. In Afghanistan, President Karzai appoints who the different representatives are. So that's like President Obama saying, You aren't allowed to elect DUNCAN HUNTER. What I'm going to do is I'm going to tell you who your Representative's going to be. That's how this government's set up in Afghanistan, and it does not properly represent the way that the Afghan people want to be governed nor need to be governed.

Just as important as our military and security mission in Afghanistan, it's just important that we work with Pakistan so that Pakistan is not a safe haven to al Qaeda and to the Taliban. I want to read a few quotes here. This is President Obama talking about Afghanistan. He says, and I believe this, Afghanistan has to be our central focus, the central front on our battle against terrorism. President Obama said, Troop levels must increase in Afghanistan. And as little as 2½ months ago, he said, For at least a year now, I have called for two additional brigades, perhaps three.

The President obviously knows what needs to be done in Afghanistan because he's called for it. In his campaign he said, Afghanistan is the central fight against terrorism. When he became President he said Afghanistan is the central fight against terrorism. And now that it looks like it's difficult politically, he's stepping back from that assessment and he's saying, Well, we have to wait and see here. We have to look at this.

I don't think that shows good leadership. What I would like to see the President do is listen to the head general who he appointed, who he put in place, and who is the smartest person possibly in the entire United States military on Afghanistan and knows how to win this fight.

□ 1800

I would like to yield such time as he may consume now to the honorable gentleman from Michigan, Mr. THAD MCCOTTER.

Mr. MCCOTTER. I thank the gentleman for yielding. Because of its prestige in the history of our Nation, the Presidency and its occupants are often envied. This view is erroneous, because within the Presidency comes the requirement to make painful, agonizing decisions between war and peace, between life and death. Many of its past occupants have said that it is the loneliest of places in the United States to be in that Oval Office when the weight of these demands fall upon your shoulders.

Understanding this and empathizing with our President and fully understanding our role as the servants of the sovereign citizens who sent us here, we have to offer the President honest advice for his consideration in just such circumstances. I do so today.

We have seen the report from the commanding General on the ground, General McChrystal, who was appointed by the President to implement the President's counterinsurgency strategy. I applauded that move. I applauded the President's willingness to go to a counterinsurgency strategy.

We have of late seen tendered to the President the recommendations of General McChrystal as to how we can, yes, still achieve victory in Afghanistan. The report said that we can have a status quo and not achieve victory. We can have 40,000 troops and a full counterinsurgency effort—or we could have more than 40,000 and a full counterinsurgency—to win.

The President is now faced with a momentous decision. The decision is whether we shall have victory or we shall have defeat, a defeat which, however disguised, as a withdrawal or otherwise, will be viewed by our enemies, our allies, and the Afghan people as a defeat.

It is my sincere hope that the President supports and implements the General's request for at least 40,000 additional troops and a full counterinsurgency strategy so that the United States, their allies, and the Afghan people can be free.

You see, within the context of this decision, the President must consider, obviously, the lives of our troops in the field, our allies in the Afghans. The President must weigh the consequences to our Nation and the world of a revanchist Taliban return to power, an emboldened al Qaeda, and the dangers that it imposes not only for the people of Afghanistan and the United States,

but to Afghanistan's neighbors, such as Pakistan, and to our allies, who will continue to be the targets of terrorism, as will ourselves.

In weighing this, he will also have to think about the honor of the United States, a Nation which throughout its history has posed a threat to tyrants and terrorists throughout the globe—not because of our actions, but because of our existence.

It is our existence as a free people and a people large enough of heart to expand that liberty to others to defend it here for ourselves, that we have, throughout our history, faced challenges, both martial and ideological.

Within the context of Afghanistan, a decision for a withdrawal that will constitute a defeat means that the United States of America will say to the people of Afghanistan: You will again be returned to the murderous regime of the Taliban. Women will be again treated as second class citizens. Children will again grow up in a culture of violence and hatred directed at other people, and the United States will have broken its word to them.

Today, there are decisions even greater than the one the President faces being made. It is by our men and women in uniform, our allies in the Afghans, who every day wake up fully conscious and devoted to the cause of human freedom in Afghanistan, despite whatever the Taliban and al Qaeda and others may do to them.

It is this type of decision, this type of bravery, this type of commitment to the God-given right to liberty that is possessed by every soul on this Earth that motivates ourselves and our allies in the Afghans. And I would urge the President that, in coming to your decision, you never forget that; that the strength of the United States is our willingness to sacrifice for the expansion of liberty to others to defend freedom for ourselves; that our security is from strength, not surrender; and that throughout our history and throughout the future of this free Republic we will never betray our word to oppressed peoples we have helped to come to emancipate, for in doing so we will betray our own birthright as free citizens and endanger our own security.

Let us pray for our President as he makes this fateful decision and let us hope he comes to the right one—a victory in Afghanistan, a victory for the Afghan people, a victory for the cause of human freedom in our all-too-tortured world.

I yield back to the gentleman from California.

Mr. HUNTER. I thank the gentleman from Michigan for his words so well put. You can see that he understands what is at stake in Afghanistan.

What interests me about Representative MCCOTTER's words, we just want the President to do the right thing. And we believe that he knows what the right thing is, because it was his idea. He brought up the counterinsurgency strategy. He said that Afghanistan

should be the main focus in the war on terror.

He knows what the right decision is because he has already made that decision in his mind months ago. He put in General McChrystal because he knew that General McChrystal was the right guy at the right time to lead us to victory in Afghanistan.

The President knows all of this, and we can only pray that he makes the right decision in Afghanistan or America will be a much less safe place than it is now.

What happens if we don't win in Afghanistan? What happens if we keep the troop levels the same or we incrementally escalate our troop levels over there that is not a surge but we add a few thousand troops at a time, what's going to happen in Afghanistan?

First, Afghanistan will become once again a petri dish for terrorists. Al Qaeda will return to Afghanistan. There's already networks there. One is the Hakani network. They're in touch with al Qaeda all the time.

Al Qaeda will be back in Afghanistan. We won't be there anymore. The Taliban will have control of Afghanistan because they have shadow governments set up throughout the entire country.

This is not like in Iraq where there would be a car bomb going off for no reason other than to hurt people. A car bomb in Iraq is not an alternative form of government.

The Taliban in Afghanistan is an alternative form of government. They want to take over this fledgling, possibly corrupt, democracy parliamentary system that we have set up in Afghanistan. As bad as it is now, this Afghanistan Government that they have set up, the Taliban would be much, much worse.

So what if we don't win? Afghanistan will become a breeding ground for terrorism. Pakistan, which has nuclear weapons, will be destabilized, completely destabilized.

I will tell you right now what is going on in talks in Pakistan and with different Taliban people—not because I've heard this from anybody; just because I know because this happened in Iraq. The Taliban is telling the Afghan people right now: America's going to leave. Look how indecisive they are. Their President, even after he said that they're going to surge in Afghanistan to have this counterinsurgency strategy, they can't make a decision. And the people of Afghanistan are listening.

Why would the people in Afghanistan not go with the Taliban forces if they think that we're going to leave? Because if we leave, they're going to be slaughtered. There will be reprisal attacks against those Afghans who dared help America; who dared tell us where the IEDs were being planted at; who dared say, These guys over here are bad guys, Sergeant. Could you go get them for me?

The people of Afghanistan are going to stop working with us if we keep

being indecisive on what we're going to do over there, so Pakistan could possibly become destabilized.

Out of all of the bad things happening in this world—Mexico imploding because of its narcotics trade and its gang war, North Korea shooting off nuclear missiles, Iran shooting off nuclear missiles, getting that fissile nuclear material there—all of these things could happen.

This world is a very dangerous world. We all know that. One of the most likely, though, and one of the absolute scariest, is the destabilization of Pakistan; it's Pakistan going away and the Taliban getting their hands on their nuclear weapons. I don't think we would want to think about what would happen if the Taliban or al Qaeda got their hands on Pakistan's nuclear weapons. This entire area would be destabilized, and I guarantee you they would be gunning for another 9/11. And it would be that much easier for them because we're not there anymore.

And I understand we've been at war in Afghanistan since 9/11. We've been over there a long time, over 7 years. And I understand, Mr. Speaker, that the American people are tired of war. I was in the Marine Corps. I joined after 9/11. I did two tours in Iraq and one in Afghanistan in 2007. I was in the Battle of Fallujah in Iraq. I was in Diwaniyah. I was in Babylon.

I'm tired of war, too. But what I want to make sure of is that our country stays safe, it stays secure, and it stays free, and we don't turn our backs on a people who we promised aid to. If we lose in Afghanistan, it will embolden al Qaeda, it will embolden all of our enemies, and we will see increased attacks.

This is not a scare tactic, Mr. Speaker; this is simple fact. If we're not there, if America does not lead, our allies will not lead themselves. America is the leader in Afghanistan and our allies are following them.

I served with the British, Canadians, Australians, the Poles, Czechs, the Italians, Spaniards, French. I served with a whole lot of people, other countries that are in Afghanistan, and they're following us. We are the leaders for this war.

We are providing that leadership role and we're the economic pillar for this war, too. And it is an expensive war. Wars are extremely expensive. Afghanistan, with its tribal layout, its mountainous regions, its desert, its terrain is more complicated than Iraq is.

This is not easy. We aren't saying that this is easy. We're saying this is going to be very, very difficult. But we have the willpower, and I think we have the ability. We have the leader in General McChrystal. We sure as heck have the men and women who want to serve and win in Afghanistan. We can do this.

So, consistent with General McChrystal's recommendation, the initial strategy outlined by the President almost 7 months ago constitutes the

best way towards accomplishing all of these goals. My hope and Mr. ROONEY's hope, and it should be every America's hope, is that a favorable decision is reached promptly so that our military, this Congress, and the administration can begin doing everything they can do to provide the full resources necessary to execute a counterinsurgency strategy.

We have to know here in Congress what the President wants to do. We need to know what his decision is so we can get the men and women serving over there right now, the ones getting shot at, the ones getting IEDs, the ones getting rocketed, we want to get them what they need.

One of the things they need is the support of the American people. Until President Obama comes out, makes his decision, lets Congress know about it so we can inform our constituents and we can tell them why it's important that we win in Afghanistan, our men and women overseas right now are suffering.

You don't think that the privates, sergeants, corporals, staff sergeants at the officer corps in Afghanistan are looking back right now, watching C-SPAN watching CNN, and saying, Our main General, General McChrystal, the man who we're following, the man who's asked us to fight, the man who's asked us to drive these dangerous roads, the man who's asked us to kill the enemy for our country and our lives are put in danger, he's asking for 40,000 troops, and the administration in D.C., in Washington, is not giving them to him right now, they're thinking about it.

□ 1815

We've had enough time to think about it. It's been 7 years. Was our strategy in Afghanistan under President Bush the right one? No, it probably wasn't. It probably was not the right one. We were focused on Iraq, and frankly I think that's a good thing, too, because we have won over there now. But we need to shift focus to Afghanistan. That's what this President said he would do. Experience tells us that wars must be run by our military leaders, not politicians or bureaucrats back here in D.C. I don't want to create strategy for Afghanistan. That's not my job. My job, as a congressman, is to give the military men and women the support that they need to get the job done for whatever the President, who's Commander in Chief, sets out as their strategy and their goals. You don't want me running a war. You don't want Vice President BIDEN running a war, either. That's why General McChrystal is there. That's why General Petraeus is there. That's why General Odierno is there. They are the resident experts.

The President rightly recognizes the importance of defeating al Qaeda and the Taliban, but in order to do so, he must stay clear of political currents and do what is right. And once more, I

truly believe that he knows what is right. Because what General McChrystal, once more, has brought to the President in his resource request was what the President asked him to do.

On two occasions over the last few years, I have been to Afghanistan, both as a Member of Congress and as a Marine. While there, I served alongside and shared experiences with the best that this country has to offer. They are truly the greatest generation. People that have so much opportunity, young men and women, they could go to college, they could pretty much do whatever they wanted to do. Instead, they went and served. I have had the awesome opportunity of serving with them. And they have dutifully undertaken their mission to protect our Nation and the Afghan people. I have also spoken to many civilian leaders and military leaders outside of Afghanistan, and they know what the right thing to do is. Our goals in Afghanistan will become further out of reach. In fact, they become more out of reach every single day that we dally here at home and not give them what they have asked for.

If we significantly reduce our military presence right now, at this critical time, the war in Afghanistan will be lost. Understanding this risk, I sincerely hope that President Obama, as Commander in Chief, will follow the recommendation of his appointed military commander and commit his full support to this important mission.

HATE CRIMES LEGISLATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PERRIELLO). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate being recognized and the opportunity and the privilege to come to the floor and address you here. It is also a bit nostalgic to step in behind DUNCAN HUNTER. I remember many times standing here on the floor of the House debating issues, and a lot of them were national security issues, including our immigration issues, with DUNCAN HUNTER's father. And this transition has been very good to see a young man, a young marine, stand here in the well and speak to you and talk to you about our national security issues from the experience standpoint of a marine who has served in Afghanistan and now one who serves in the United States Congress. I very much appreciate the addition to this Congress that he is.

I lament what we have seen happen today, this activity that this Congress has gone through; the Department of Defense authorization bill that saw at least 144 or so vote against it. Most of those that voted against the authorization bill, including me, support, of course, the Department of Defense and our national security and all of our men and women in uniform and all of

our veterans all the way back to many wars prior to today. The Department of Defense authorization bill was used as a political tool by the left to advance a left-wing agenda that should be appalling to the American people if they understand the motivation of this idea of inserting hate crimes into the Department of Defense authorization bill.

It's a piece of legislation that had passed off the floor of this House a piece of stand-alone legislation. Many of us opposed it. It is activist legislation that sets up and creates sacred cows, people who get special protected status, people who are identified by their alleged, hopefully private, sexual behavior or thoughts. This is a bill that the United States Senate couldn't figure out apparently how to debate on its own and send back over here to the House amended or simply send it to the President. So they polluted the Department of Defense authorization bill with it.

I would be very happy to yield so much time as he may consume to the gentleman from California who I think has an opinion on this matter.

Mr. HUNTER. I thank the gentleman.

The liberals in this Congress and in the Senate did a despicable thing today. There is usually one bill in this Congress that gets passed that's non-partisan. It's bipartisan. It's the authorization bill to get our military what it needs. And it has never been so important as it has been during this time of war. This is beans, band-aids, bullets, trucks, armor, and flak jackets. Everything that we need to win these wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is in this authorization bill that was being voted on today. I voted "yes" on it. Many voted "no," and they were in the right as well as I was in the right. And here is why. To attach a hate crimes bill, a thought crimes bill, which is wrong in and of its own, but has nothing to do with the military, nothing whatsoever, but the Democrat Congress knew that we would not vote against the military. That's the hand that they played. So they put one of the worst and most rotten bills that has been passed by this Congress on top. They piggy-backed it on top of our defense authorization bill because who's going to vote against the troops?

That was their slant today. And as a marine and as a congressman, it is one of the most despicable things that I have ever seen done by this body. Some of us voted for it. Some of us voted against it. Each of us voted our own conscience on this, and both votes were right. We do have to get our military what it needs on one hand, but on the other hand, we are not going to be ridden roughshod over by a liberal Congress that thinks that they can attach absolutely despicable bills to important things like the defense authorization bill. That's why voting "no" on this bill today was also the right choice. So I thank the gentleman for his conscientious vote today, and I appreciate it.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Reclaiming my time, I so much appreciate the gentleman from California. I'm looking to this new leadership that's emerged into the new Congress, and DUNCAN HUNTER is one of those people. The statement that he has made, I concur with. I have looked at the Department of Defense authorization bill with hate crimes legislation, which is, in fact, thought crimes legislation, built into it, slipped into it as a, not quite a poison pill, because there were liberals over here today, and I would be happy to yield to any one of them that want to stand up and defend themselves, liberals over here today that maybe for the first time voted for the Department of Defense authorization bill because it had this hate crimes legislation in it, the thought crimes legislation in it. Their radical social agenda in some cases overcame their resistance to supporting our military. And so it was a double-edged sword that was put in here, a rotten sword, the wrong, wrong thing to do.

I looked at it from this perspective: that if we are going to let them put into the Department of Defense a piece of legislation that's so contrary to the rule of law, so abhorrent to equal justice under the law, it turns out to be holding the Department of Defense hostage; it's almost like somebody kidnapped the Department of Defense bill and required that in order to pay off the kidnappers, the ransom note was the hate crimes bill. That's what happened. I don't think anybody is going to stand up and defend that today. They wanted to avoid that debate. They wanted to force a vote. And President Obama, of course, supports the hate crimes legislation. So he will sign the bill, and it will be law in the United States of America. And then we will be asking juries and judges to discern not the act that might be committed that's a crime, but the thought that was in the head of the perpetrator and the victim. And it is not the basis of the law going all the way back to English common law to determine what's in the head of the perpetrator or the victim when a crime is committed because an individual is a sacred life. All life is equal under the law. Whether you're a little-bitty baby or whether you are a senior citizen with a terminal illness, those that value those lives under the law are valued equally.

The father of Senator BOB CASEY of Pennsylvania as a Democrat Governor of Pennsylvania, said this: Human life cannot be measured. It is the measure itself against which all other things are weighed. We measure the life and say that it is the measure itself, and an act committed against a person's life, and it could be murder, it could be assault, it could be rape, it could be a number of different acts actually against a person's property, and now this hates crime legislation for the first time would increase the punishment against someone because the victim may have perceived that they were